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The Holy Fool

The Third Member Of The Triad

The Bard

> "Remember, the Moon is only half as big as the Earth, but it's twice as far away."

Anonymous

After some time musing on the concept of Goddess/God that is common in Wiccan (and most Neo-Pagan groups) and seeing the common theme of "things come in threes" in these belief systems, I fell to wondering "Why only the God and Goddess? If all things come in threes, where is the Third Aspect that should be there?"

So what is this Third Aspect? I feel it is the Holy Fool; the Prometheus who is the Trickster, the God (neuter) that rolls the dice. This also fills in certain holes in neo-Pagan Theology that have bothered me for some time, too.

First, we need to have a quick look at the Holy Fool in religious and/or cultural beliefs, both primitive and modern:

- American Indian:
- Aztec: Ueuecoyotl
- Caddo: Coyote
- Chinook: Coyote
- Coos: Coyote
- Haida: Raven
- Hopi: Mudhead Kachina, Clown Kachina
- Kiowa: Coyote
- Navaho: Coyote
- Nez Perce: Coyote
- Omaha: Coyote, Rabbit, Iktinike, Orphan
- Pueblo: Koshare

- Sioux: Spider
- Tillamook: Coyote
- Tinglit: Raven
- Winnebago: Rabbit
- Zuni: Coyote
- African: Spider, Tortoise, Rabbit, Jackal
- Graeco/Roman: Pan, Dionysis
- Celtic: Phooka and the like (see Irish: Fear Dearg, and a host of others. The Fool must love Ireland very much He made so many of Itself there!)
- Norse: Loki -and- Balder
- Banks Island: Clat
- Micronesia: Nareau
- England: Puck, Black Jack Davy
- Christianity: "Doubting" Thomas, and The Christ Himself, in many ways and Judas, too.
- 20th Cent. North American: Bugs Bunny, The Joker, Mr. Mxyzpltk, Murphy, ("And Pooh is a -good- example, too!" said Eeyore)
- Neo-Paganism: Discordians
- 18th thru 20th Cent. Appalachian: Jack (from British Isles)
- 18th and 19th Cent. N.A. Black: Br'er Rabbit, Long John, &c.
- German: Tyl Eulenspiegel
- Italy: Harlequin (check out Agatha Christie's stories about "Harley Quinn." VERY interesting!)
- Islamic: Juha, Abu Nawwas, Mullah Nasruddin, Nasreddin Khoja, Nasreddin Hodja
- Japanese: Fox, Hotei, and the whole concept of Zen

And the many, many instances of the Hero figure and his Friend in most people's mythology Gilgamesh and Enkidu, Robin Hood and Little John, the Mythic Hollywood Western Hero and his ridiculous sidekick, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza and many times you see the recurrent theme of the Great Betrayal of the Hero, which leads to His death and to His Resurrection!

One immediately sees that the Fool is a universal constant in folk belief, just as the Goddess and God are! (NB: I have not gotten more specific for two reasons: one, for limitations of space, and two, to encourage others to do a little reading on their own!)

As most things, the Fool is Personified in three basic Aspects that (of course) overlap with each other and with the God and Goddess. The first is that of the Saviour God, the Prometheus, the Culture Hero, who brings Knowledge (and -occasionally- Wisdom) to Mankind. This Aspect loves Mankind with all His Being, and only wishes Good. His Good Intentions sometimes fall short of His (or Mankind's) expectations, however.

The second is that of the Clown, the Nerd, the Jerk, that teaches by his own mistakes (and who usually comes out ahead because of His own Innocence.) This Aspect is mostly neutral, and is how He seems to mostly manifest Himself.

But let us not forget the third, and darker, side of the Fool, best exemplified by Jack Nicholson's portrayal of The Joker in the film version of "Batman." Just as the Goddess has Her Dark side (the Crone, the Morrigan, &c) and the God has His (Odin as Death-God) so does the Fool have a terrifying Aspect (at least, from the human point of view): Chaos Personified.

This is not an Aspect to invoke, as It does not care. Period. It is the ultimate psychopath, the ultimate Spoiled Brat, the quintessence of Ego-centric self-love. In some circles, it could be quite nicely named Ahriman, or Shaitan, or Satan, because it fits all concepts of that Middle-Eastern deity except one: It does not care if Man worships It or not.

It is not in -conflict- with the God and/or Goddess, It is -not- on the kind of power-trip that the Judeo-Christian Satan is represented as having, it just -is-. It should be considered as neither "good" nor "evil," though it can personify both or either or neither! This is confusing, but with a little thought the concept will (hopefully) come clear.

(And, just in passing, the film version of "Batman" is perhaps a very good metaphor for the eternal struggle between the Fool-as-Prometheus (Batman) and the Fool-as-Chaos (the Joker).

Are you confused? If you are, GOOD! If you are not, keep thinking by not-thinking. (wha-a-a-a-a-t?) Some of the best examples of the three Personifications are found in the Navaho and Zuni tales of Coyote, or the Br'er Rabbit tales, or the older Bugs Bunny cartoons, or even Walt Disney's Goofy. And, while speaking of classic animation, if you can see any of the cartoons of the Cannibal Boy and the Mynah Bird, do so! It shows not one, but TWO Aspects in action!

For a look at His more serious (?) side, try J.R.R. Tolkien's wonderful evocation of Tom Bombadil who is described as "the oldest." Prof. Tolkien came very close to the core of the truth with that one!

The Fool is your slightly daffy Uncle, that comes to visit at Christmas and is such fun to be with, but who seems to have a sadness about him too, that you found out later, when you were all grown up, was his slide into alcoholism. The Fool is the American sit-com "Daddy" who never seems to get anything right, but wins out in the end anyway. The Fool is the classic scene of Bugs Bunny, floating in a washtub in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, happily singing "As Time Goes By," blissfully uncaring about his obvious predicament one which would send a human into sheer despair knowing that something will turn up, some scam that he can pull that will get him out of the washtub and into clover again. The Fool is the Tarot's Fool, of course but He is also the Hanged Man.

Do -not- invoke the Fool unless you are ready for literally ANYTHING to happen! He just might turn you into a Large Green Frog just to observe what happens He is capricious. He is unpredictable. He is what He is, and nothing you can do will turn Him from His Purpose, whatever that may be at any given moment. He is "Murphy," and whatever can go wrong, WILL go wrong or right. Unless you have an uncommonly flexible mind, you -might- not be able to handle it!

He has no Festival, unless it is the Lupercal, or perhaps April Fool's Day, or even New Year's Eve, for every day is His, as He chooses. Some have inquired about the seeming overlap of functions in the Goddess/God/Fool triad, and this should be addressed here. The modern Western mind tends to "pigeonhole" things, and rigidly excludes other things from these pigeonholes. This, I feel, is in some ways an error in thinking, especially about the Triad.

One cannot and should not "compartmentalize" the God/Fool/Goddess into three rigidly separate Beings, but rather think of them as three separate sources of ripples in the same Pond: the ripples interact and intersect, and act on each other, but move within the same Source, whatever That may be.

-the Bard
at Samhain, 1990 CE

I wish I could list all of my sources, but if I did, it would add several pages to this text, and I am trying to keep it short. I -will- recommend reading one book, however, that will give a great insight into the Holy Fool:

CONTRARIWISE

Zohra Greenhalgh, Ace (paperback) April 1989

0-441-117112-2

(it has a sequel, but I can't remember the title offhand)

> "Rimble, Rimble!"

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